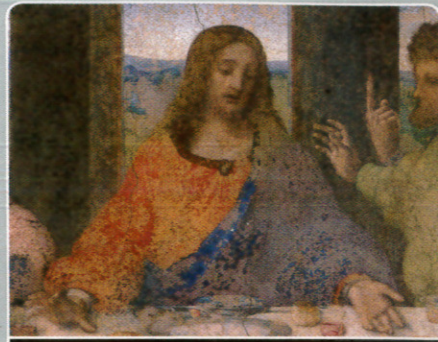


†CHRISTIANITY

Historical Origins

Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, also called Jesus Christ by Christians. Christians believe he was the son of God who died to save humanity from sin. He was a Jew who lived in the first century near Jerusalem, which was then part of the Roman Empire. Roman rulers put him to death fearing he might lead a revolt. The life of Jesus is recorded in the New Testament of the Christian Bible, which also contains stories of his followers and letters outlining Christian beliefs.



Detail of Jesus in Leonardo DaVinci's *The Last Supper*

Central Beliefs

Most Christians believe there is only one God, who exists in three forms: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The New Testament teaches that after Jesus was executed, he rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Christians believe they gain salvation by believing in Jesus and following his teachings. Christians gather at places of worship called churches. Their religious leaders are called either priests or ministers.

Spread of Christianity

Jesus' followers, called disciples, carried their faith around the Mediterranean world. In the A.D. 300s, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Later, during the period of colonization, Europeans spread Christianity around the globe. It is now the largest and most widespread religion.

Christians wave palm fronds in Managua, Nicaragua, as they celebrate Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week.